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SUBJECT: PRE G8 MEETING: FRANCE HARDENS POSITION ON IRAN

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathleen H. Allegrone, reas
ons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) President Sarkozy's Middle East Advisor Boris Boillon told Political Minister Counselor July 3 that the French believe there is "no longer any possibility of dialogue" with the government of Iran. "Sanctions are the only weapon now," Boillon insisted. He said that the current sanctions regime has been effective and therefore must be strengthened. By weakening Iran economically and isolating it politically, sanctions undermined popular support for the government. In fact, sanctions played a significant part in precipitating the election crisis in Iran, Boillon argued, by creating "two of the three key ruptures" in the system -- between the middle class and the government, and between the working class and the government. He added that President Obama's overture to the government of Iran helped to cause the third rupture -- between the supporters of Moussavi, who sought to re-engage with the West, and the rest of the clerical and political establishment, who have until now largely resisted this engagement. Since the government has used such ruthless and despicable tactics to maintain control, Boillon said, the GOF no longer believes it is possible to engage with them; it is preferable instead, he asserted, to use sanctions to continue to weaken them.

¶2. (SBU) Thus, Boillon reported, Sarkozy will be pushing hard at the G8 Summit for a tougher stand on Iran, including new sanctions. He explained that the French used to support the deadline which they believe President Obama has established for a re-assessment of the USG overture toward Iran -- the end of 2009 -- but they have now decided to conduct their own policy evaluation sooner, by September at the latest. (NOTE: Two key elements of this policy review are clear already, according to Boillon, as the French have decided to oppose dialogue and to support the imposition of stiffer sanctions. END NOTE.)

¶3. (SBU) Boillon also reported (strictly protect) that a 22-year-old French citizen was arrested July 2 at the airport in Tehran on her way out of the country. The Iranians have accused the woman, whom Boillon believes to be named Clothilde Heiss, of spying. She managed to call the French Cultural Attache in Tehran to inform him of her arrest and detention in the notorious Evin prison. Boillon explained that Heiss is a student in France who was temporarily studying Persian in Tehran. He asked that the USG keep this information very close hold while the GOF works with the government of Iran to secure her immediate release. He confirmed to poloff July 6 that she remains in Evin prison and that the GOF continues to try to persuade the Iranians to free her.

PEKALA